

Legislative Testimony
Appropriations Committee
Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments
HB 5037 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30,
2023
February 23, 2022

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dr. David Fried. I have been practicing dentistry in Connecticut for over 30 years. I am a retired CT Army National Guard Lt Col, where I served as the State Dentist. I have been involved with the Mission of Mercy since its first year, and have been a Husky Medicaid Provider until I retired from private practice. I continue to see Husky patients as a UCONN volunteer faculty member in the clinic, and take UCONN Dental Students on Service trips. I serve on the Benecare Advisory Board, and at the American Dental Association on the National Eldercare Advisory Committee.

I am writing in regards to the Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments for the Department of Social Services and the proposed increase to adult dental Medicaid reimbursement rates.

There is no doubt in my mind that the increase to reimbursement rates is very long overdue. The State of Connecticut and its citizens have immeasurably benefited from the good-heartedness of the Dentists in this State. Approximately fifteen years ago, the Dentists stepped up and created a viable network to treat the underserved population in this state. The rates at that time were not great, but they were at a level that would allow Dentists to provide care. Not just care, but actually quality care in a private setting. Since then, there have been annual increases in inflationary costs including cost of staff, materials, rent, electricity and equipment. The past two years alone has seen a dramatic increase in costs, including an estimated \$15-40 per patient in COVID related expenses. No other businesses have had to endure the honor of doing business with Connecticut like Dental businesses. At this point, it costs money to see a Husky patient, as reimbursements are below the actual cost of some procedures.

The bottom line is this. If you do not increase rates, the network will continue to fall apart. The State will see an increase in hospital emergency room visits, and the money will be spent in a less cost-effective manor with a less than ideal outcome.

Connecticut is well regarded nationally as taking care of its citizens and is held as the gold standard for improving the overall health of it underserved. There is the well-documented concept known as "The Connecticut Effect" which showed that the initial expensive years of treatment 15 years ago, when the State improved the reimbursement levels, were followed by a decline in costs and increase in maintenance (cleaning and exam) visits. The bottom line is that once the problems are fixed, the annual visits and preventative care save money and create better health. Remember, the gateway to the body is the mouth, and preventing oral disease contributes to overall

health. This is also known as spending less money on medical care by improving preventive care.

We are beyond receiving a token increase in fees. Please consider correcting the fees which have been ignored for 15 years.

I thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

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